



Testimony to House Health Policy Committee, March 22, 2012
Pending Substitute for HB 4718 "2nd pair of hands"

MICHIGAN

DENTAL

HYGIENISTS'

ASSOCIATION

Good Morning Chairwoman Haines and Members of the Committee

Thank you for hearing testimony in support of the pending substitute for HB 4718 for a second pair of hands for the registered dental hygienist. My name is Bonnie Nothoff, I am a registered dental hygienist of 28 years, and I represent the Michigan Dental Hygienists' Association. I'd like to talk to you about the benefits of 2nd pair of hands and how we worked with the MDA to not increase scope.

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Seven years ago, the 93rd legislature unanimously ushered in a monumental law (PA 161, 2005) that addresses prevention in the dental field by authorizing the registered dental hygienist to provide preventive care to underserved populations without assignment and with off site supervision by a dentist. Also, this law does so without the mandatory tie to Medicaid. Medicaid is used but other sources of income are applicable as well. As a result of this legislation, we in the field of dental hygiene are seeing thousands of people otherwise not seen, preventively, thereby reducing in numbers we can't even count, those who enter the emergency room for a condition that easily could have been prevented, or at least referred to an appropriate source.

I have attached a one-year report from the Michigan Department of Community Health showing numbers of patients seen and referred from just one year. Please multiply that by at least 6 years to determine the actual numbers seen. Today there are approximately 55 PA 161 programs, approximately 200 registered dental hygienists and approximately 100 dentists involved in these programs and growing every month. Solving the prevention problem is happening today because the Legislature of the State of Michigan saw the wisdom in working toward utilizing the registered dental hygienist to capacity.

HB 4718 in its' substitute form furthers that wisdom. In law today, registered dental hygienists are prohibited from using what is called "2nd pair of hands." When we perform our services today, we "assist" each other because we do not have the authority to have an assistant. I have attached the definition for second pair of hands from Administrative Law. We met with the Michigan Dental Association and agreed with them, that, if assigned by the supervising dentist of a PA 161 program, registered dental hygienists should be authorized to utilize a second pair of hands. The same should apply in private

(w) "Second pair of hands," as used in R 338.11109, means acts, tasks, functions, and procedures performed by a dental assistant, registered dental assistant, or registered dental hygienist at the direction of a dentist who is in the process of rendering dental services and treatment to a patient. The acts, tasks, functions, and procedures performed by a dental assistant, registered dental assistant, or registered dental hygienist are ancillary to the procedures performed by the dentist and intended to provide help and assistance at the time the procedures are performed. This definition shall not be deemed to expand the duties of the dental assistant, registered dental assistant, or registered dental hygienist as provided by the act and rules promulgated by the board.

practice; that is, it should state in law that we are authorized, if assigned by the supervising dentist, to utilize a second pair of hands if the dentist is away.

Note how many hygienists are involved in one procedure. This is a poor division of labor and use of professional resources. A "second pair of hands" would allow the other registered dental hygienists-or in one case a dentist to provide more services.

When applying sealants, maintaining a dry field is critical. An assistant can maintain that field by suctioning, retraction and other modalities while the registered dental hygienist places the sealant.

When the hygienist is taking the radiographs, the assistant can retract the cheek, calm the patient, expose the radiograph.

When performing a prophylaxis, (teeth cleaning) an assistant, invaluable to all procedures, can maintain a dry field, pass and retrieve instruments, suction, provide patient comfort.

In HB 4718 no one involved with treatment is authorized to perform duties not otherwise defined by law. Today, hygienists assisting hygienists perform these procedures. The House Health Policy Committee can elevate the process, reduce dental health care costs to the state of Michigan, expand preventive care and continue reforming oral health remedies to our citizens by passing HB 4718 in its' substitute form from Committee to the full House.

Finally, please recognize that the impetus behind 2nd pair of hands is:

1. It benefits all citizens in Michigan by greatly diminishing costs, increasing jobs and adding value to collaborative practice.
2. 2nd pair of hands provides more quality care
3. All agree a second pair of hands is needed by the RDH
4. Financially no cost to the State of Michigan.

Please vote yes, and thank you for your attention to prevention!

Sincerely,

Bonnie Nothoff RDH
Bonnie Nothoff RDH
Director, Governmental Affairs

*From
Administrative
Rules, Board of
Dentistry*